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The Role of the Administrator: Past, Present and Future

By
A. D. GORWALA

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The Role of the Administrator: Past, Present and Future

PUBLIC administration is co-existent with organised government. While some of its most important basic features are always the same and a problem which arises today may well have had its counterpart in the time of Chandragupta or Confucius, yet each age and organisation moulds the men who are responsible for the day to day tasks that make up administration and leaves on them its impress. Today I am privileged to talk to you about the work of a section of the men who performed the tasks of higher administration in two very significant periods in the history of this country and to attempt to draw some guidance from their work for the conduct of those administrative tasks that lie before us in the immediate future. The first of the two periods that are the subject matter of our concern covers the two decades ending with 1939. The second stretches through the war to the obtaining of independence and on to the first elections under the new Constitution. The nature of the task of the man in charge of general administration in these times, his preparation for the task, the manner of his performance of it and any special characteristics in that performance, these will be some of the points to which I shall invite your attention.

But first, to define terms. The word "administration" in this context includes responsibilities for the supervision at a certain level of the functioning of the machinery of government, for redesigning the machinery for new needs and purposes and for assisting in the formulation of those purposes. It thus extends to policy execution at one end and policy making at the other but does not fully cover either of them. For instance, the functions of the Minister are

excluded and so are those of the subordinate officials. Again "general" as applied to administration excludes specialised branches such as the medical, meteorological and others. Broadly, therefore, the kind of administrator I shall deal with is he who held posts varying from that of permanent headship of one of the great departments of state, either in the central or in the provincial governments, to that of charge of a sub-division of a district. Not of course that the administrator who in the first period and again during the critical war years of the second rose higher than the permanent head of a department to a seat in the policy-making councils of government itself can be altogether excluded, for he often exemplified in some measure both the merits and the defects of the type.

In these days when all utterances before being admitted to receptivity, are deeply scrutinised to discover the conditioning of the utterer, it would be as well to make clear that I, who speak to you, was a part of the administrative machine during 15 of the 20 years of the first period and 8 of the 12 years of the second and have been in frequent contact with it for the last four of the second. No man can hope wholly to eliminate from his thinking the effect of the impressions of his past. The working of our minds and even more their subconscious reactions are, to a far greater extent than most of us are aware, the resultants of our own histories. All therefore that any of us can do when called upon to deliver his views on matters and transactions with which he has been intimately concerned is to have present before him vividly this probability of bias and try sincerely to be as objective as possible. To which, in extenuation I may be allowed to add that the subject of this address was not of my own choice. When honoured by the invitation to speak before you, other themes occurred to me, but finally, in deference to a suggestion from a quarter, suggestions from which are, by those with any claim to judgment, always received with the greatest respect, *"THE ROLE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE"*

became the subject. A recital based on contact with real experience was infinitely to be preferred, I was told, to the setting forth of the conclusions of much midnight study.

With these words in mind, my first inclination was to recount to you some of the more interesting happenings of 23 years of work and of the atmosphere surrounding them, the meteing out of patriarchal justice in jirgas with the assistance of tribal chiefs; private settlements at the tent door in the presence of large interested and often loudly approving or critical crowds of the disputes and longstanding feuds of a hot-headed people with a very special conception of personal honour, whose axes were ever in their hands and to whom a blow came often more naturally than a word; the prosecution of semi-feudal lords under the ordinary law for most oppressive acts against their poor neighbours; the provision of large labour forces to fight the rising river which in mid-summer often threatened to burst all protective bunds and engulf the crops and villages of a whole countryside; the settling of claims against and the economical management of large estates encumbered by debts or left in the possession of minors, sometimes involving the paternal and particularly anxiety-causing duty of arranging suitable marriages; the colonising of great tracts of land to which water was just being brought by new canals; the evolution and getting accepted by Ministers of a new system of land revenue assessment by which the revenue fluctuated with the prices of produce; the teething troubles of broadcasting in India; the shock of finding in Delhi and Simla for the first time a society the main concern of many of whose members was not their work but just getting on, and whose conception of their work was often that of the provision of apologies for not going ahead with the right things; the straightforward and more dignified approach of the secretariat in Bombay; the problems of food control, rationing and procurement both in the provincial and the Indian contexts, with their constant struggles and the happy non-official co-operation they created; the attempt to advise on

the establishment of a reasonable price level throughout the country; and resignation emphatically to warn against the dangers of an impending disastrous change in policy. On second thoughts however it seemed to me that an audience in this celebrated and ancient home of statecraft and learning would on an occasion of this nature prefer the general to the particular, the more useful to the more entertaining.

Of the period 1919 to 1939 very little good has been said. Uncertainty, frustration, calamity were its keynotes. It ended with an explosion, the effects of which have produced fundamental changes in every sphere of human activity, changes which still have to work themselves out and of the process of whose working out, we are often the unwilling observers. The men charged with the task of administration in India during this period naturally did not escape the effects of the influences of their time. Much that had seemed to them certain was now unsettled. New values were appearing that seemed to make light of their accustomed ways. Politically it was a period of constitutional advancement. The Montagu-Chelmsford reforms which brought in diarchy placed the government of certain subjects in the hands of Indians. There followed a confused and troubled interval of rejection, non-co-operation, repression, round table conferences, failures to reach agreement between the major communities and the Act of 1935, which offered almost complete autonomy in the provinces. After considerable argument, 1937 saw the advent of popular ministries, only to be withdrawn two years later after the outbreak of the war by the Central Committee of the party in power.

The practice of attempting to describe a period by a designation has rightly been regarded by careful students as unwise. The label, even when it does not mislead, cannot but leave out of account a number of significant activities; and yet the salient characteristic cannot be better expressed than in a title. The state during this period then is best designated "The security state". Its primary attention was

devoted to the maintenance of order and the enforcement of the due processes of the law. The keeping free of his charge from disturbances, whatever their origin, whether political demonstrations and route marches, or communal or labour riots became the chief task of the administrator. Peace must be maintained. The feeling of tension, which news of impending meetings or approach of communal holidays brought to the administrators' mind, and of relief, when the meetings had ended without incident or the holiday processions had passed by without rioting, are still vivid to the memory of many a man whose hair is now grey and mind, no longer responsive to the ravages of emotion. Not so vivid, fortunately, the weary tales of accusation and counteraccusation, the fixing of responsibility, on occasion, over the use of excessive force, the lengthy enquiries, the constant reports to government by telegram and letter, sometimes even by telephone, the answering now and again of charges of unpreparedness or overpreparedness, the deep-seated indignation at being accused of fomenting the very trouble one had been most anxious to avoid.

The second main task of the administration during this period was the maintenance of efficiency in all basic matters. Crime must be kept down. The land revenue must be justly assessed and properly collected. The record of rights must be kept in order. Full and adequate touring must be done. The importance of field inspection must be realised. In all revenue and forest matters, the rules must be strictly observed. Offices must be properly inspected and errors shown up and repaired. Confidential records must be accurately written and kept in good order. Supervision over the work of subordinate magistrates must be strict and there must be no undue delay in dealing with criminal cases by the principal magistrate himself. The confidence of the subordinate services must be kept and their trust in their superior officers and in government increased by fair dealing, observance of promises and considerate treatment. A special characteristic of this period was the great emphasis laid on

the necessity for complete impartiality as between man and man, community and community. The ideal of justice was very firmly held aloft before the administrator's eye. He must not discriminate and if the scale was ever tipped, it should only be in favour of the poor in exceptionally distressing circumstances.

The alteration of fixed economic patterns was no part of his task. An idealist here or there might concern himself with education in the wider sense, the spread of co-operation or the investigation of methods for alleviating poverty but on the whole the tendency was to leave economic matters, whether in the urban or rural centres, severely alone. The economic climate of the time was completely opposed to all ideas of state entrance into hitherto unvisited regions. Not of course that there was no development by the state during this period. The great Sukkur Barage and irrigation schemes in Sind, the hydro-electric power schemes in Madras, the Lloyd dam and canals near Poona and other smaller works in many parts of the country were constructed during these years. All these, however, followed the accepted pattern of state works, the provision of irrigation or of electrical power. In brief, it may be said that there was a certain kind of economic development but it was development not based on any economic ideology.

These being the general tasks, what was the preparation for them? The young administrator's mental ability was ordinarily above the average, having been tested out in a stiff competetive examination. Thereafter he had spent a year, or two in the case of candidates selected after examination in India, at Oxford or Cambridge studying Indian history, languages and law. After passing the qualifying examinations at the end of the period of probation, he was posted to a district and began to learn his work by watching a somewhat more senior colleague in charge of a sub-division do his. He was also appointed a third class magistrate and set to try minor cases independently. Meanwhile, he was

expected to study the theory of the work he was doing and seeing his senior do by preparing for an examination in various legal enactments, circular orders and government accounts, which he was expected to take within four months of joining. He was also expected to pass within six months of joining an examination in the language of the area where he was serving, the standard being such as to indicate his ability to understand easily and speak and read fluently the language. During this period, which would generally be the cold weather, November or December to April, the young man would have toured extensively with his senior colleague over the countryside and got to know quite familiarly the village forms and records. He would have also begun to get some understanding of the characteristics and abilities of the men whose work he was intended to supervise. Some of the gaucheness which had not sometimes altogether disappeared from even the best products of universities, English and Indian, would also have got worn off in the process of dealing with men and affairs and in attempting to assess situations. Following the passing of the first examination, the young officer would be put in independent charge of the revenue work of a Taluk. At the same time, the grade of his magesterial powers would be raised to the second class, if he had tried a sufficient number of third class cases and had satisfied the District Magistrate that he could be trusted with enhanced powers. At the end of about six months, he would be expected to pass another and a stiffer examination in laws, regulations and the minutae of the revenue and judicial administration and in the general picture of the accounts administration. This examination was dignified by the name of the Higher standard and it was only after passing it that the supernumerary period could be ended and the officer considered fit to hold charge of a subdivision, in other words, to begin doing the work for which he had been appointed. Either within this second six months period or some time shortly after it, the officer would spend a month or so in training at the Survey School, where the endeavour would be to get him acquainted with the mys-

teries of chain, cross staff, theodolite, plotting, survey numbers, sub-divisions, the formation of maps and the relation of the village map to the taluk map, the district map and the provincial map. This then constituted the formal training and throughout the rest of his working life, the general administrator never had another period of intensive preparation though from time to time, on being called upon to perform strange and diverse tasks, he might be posted a month or, in special cases, two before the date of taking over the appointment, so that his predecessor could induct him into the specialities of the work and mention to him personally the tricky points that he had noticed. Sometimes, of course, this was not possible. Hence arose the practice of handing-over notes in which the man leaving an appointment would put down his conception of its duties, the special difficulties of the work, any really important problems that might be pending, any suggestions he might have for dealing with them, his views of prominent personalities with whom contact was likely to be frequent, ending often on a note of cheerful commiseration, commiseration at the miserable state to which the new incumbent was bound to be reduced and cheerfulness at the thought of having shaken of the burden for some months at least!

I have described above the formal part of the training of the new officer. More important, perhaps, however was the informal part, that which took a raw college graduate with a certain amount of aptitude, industry and ability and made of him a Man. Education, it has been said, is a bringing forth not a putting in. It can only cultivate what Nature has planted. If there has been default there, no amount of training or influence can help. As the Persian proverb has it "The ass of Jesus, even after it had visited Mecca, was still an ass". But in the large majority of average young men, there are, sometimes near the surface, sometimes more deeply embedded in layers of habit and custom, the qualities of initiative, capacity to feel conscious of responsibility and to rise to it, willingness to sacrifice leisure, health, inclination, in the interests of work, desire to live up

to certain estimable standards. These qualities it was that the unofficial training brought to the fore in greater or lesser degree depending upon the original individual. With hardly any did it fail completely. The nature of this unofficial training was somewhat remarkable. It was often administered quite imperceptibly. Social contacts furnished the real occasion for it. A good Collector's house was often a second home to the young Assistant Collector. He was encouraged to drop in of an evening. Hardly ever was the Collector so busy or so occupied with his own avocations that he would not have time for a few words with the young man. In addition, he might ask the new magistrate to come and have tea with him one evening a week. Almost in passing, he would suggest that it would perhaps be a good thing if he brought along any particular cases in which he had written judgments or in which points of evidence were perplexing him. The young Assistant Collector would arrive at 4-30 with his bundle of cases. Seated on a comfortable sofa in an attractively furnished drawing room, plied with good tea and excellent home-made cake, the touchiness and arrogance so characteristic of the intelligent, inexperienced young prize-winner to whom for some period at least all the world seems inferior, would fall off like an old garment. Differences of kind or race would sink to insignificance and the young man would, sometimes to his surprise, find himself talking freely, listening with attention, proferring his work for examination, pleased at the praise, not hurt at the warning and advice. The process of which this is an example continued almost unconsciously not only during the supernumerary year but also in the early years that followed. These methods became so habitual to the good senior officer that all the strain that there must have been in them in his own early years disappeared. Dealing with the young in this manner became second nature and consequently all the more effective. The young man on his side imbibed standards, sometimes without even being told. Automatically he learned that there were certain things one did not do. However awkward the circumstances in which one

might find oneself, whatever and however grave the consequences to oneself of any action one had taken, one did not lie. In all emergencies, it was one's duty to stand firm. However frightened one might feel, one did not show it. In all one's dealings, the rule must be probity. The throwing of one's own responsibility on one's subordinates degraded one not only in the sight of one's fellows but even more in one's own eyes. One's work, whatever it was, must have preference over all other interests. While one showed deference to one's elders and betters, one was not frightened of them. If one differed from them on any important matter, one expressed one's views frankly. Apart from the Collector, the young man felt this influence, though at much longer intervals, through the Commissioner, an older man, often sterner and more set, but one who could relax for the young and never failed to find time for a chat at least once or twice in the course of his visit. The young Assistant Collector or Collector in trouble found often in the Commissioner both a sympathiser and a counsellor. He might say to him after hearing the full facts "You really are a damned young fool". But the young man would leave his presence strengthened and quite often with his mind made up to take the more difficult and proper course. Thus was built up what might be termed 'the morale' of the general administrator, that state of mind in which men seek to apply their full powers to the task on which they are engaged by reason of the satisfaction they derive from their own self-realisation and their pride in the service.

With this material thus fashioned to perform the tasks already stated, what shall be our judgment as to the manner of the performance? The objectives we have found were limited. It would be difficult to say that they were not attained. On the whole, throughout the length and breadth of this country, despite a political campaign which from time to time rose to tremendous heights and broke out into bouts of violence, peace was maintained. Law and order was enforced and the common man was enabled to live his ordi-

nary life and go about his normal avocations undisturbed. The tasks of basic administration were performed reasonably efficiently and the system of administration stretching in unbroken line from the village Patil to government functioned effectively. The real disadvantages lay elsewhere. The general administrator seemed on the whole to be a caste by himself, standing outside the people and different from it. There was in many parts of the country, especially in the ryotwari tracts, a great deal of touch between him and the villager, kept generally through the intensive touring that was a regular part of routine procedure. But there was little co-ordination in thought or feeling between him and the educated classes of the people. His outlook was often limited. Even when noted for scholarship and culture, he seemed incapable of seeing certain aspects. The eyes of his mind sometimes seemed to wear blinkers. Some among his class were also imbued with a special stubbornness, the obverse of the quality probably of standing firm. Acknowledgment of regret for some unfortunate happening rarely came easily. Hence the reputation for a peculiar adherence to a so-called prestige, which was the curse of government in India for many years and in fact did it irreparable harm.

The majority of general administrators belonged to another race and while some of them fully sympathised with the desire for self-government, others thought of it in terms of undisguised disaster. The lot of the Indians in the service was extremely difficult during this period. They were often between two fires. Most of them held firmly the view that self-government was better than good government. Some went further and questioned whether the security state did in any case constitute really good government. The motives of the majority of them in joining service had been somewhat mixed. It was a good career, well-paid, with a great deal of status and prestige. If they came in, it meant a foreigner less. The earlier fathers of the Congress had attached great importance to increasing the number of

Indian general administrators. They had felt that it was the young Indian's duty to get all the experience possible in government that he could, so as to be useful when power came to Indian hands. Later political developments had been on other lines. Their aim was often the paralysing of government and the general administrator was called upon in the name of patriotism to resign, either as a protest or as an aid to paralysis. The general administrator did not believe government could be paralysed in this fashion. Even if it could, it would be against the real interest of the people to attempt it. For the result would be not self-government but anarchy, than which any government was obviously to be preferred. At the same time, each attempt to increase experience of actual government by the politicians who would ultimately have to govern was by them strenously rejected. Everything or nothing was the plea, except for a short span of two years towards the end of the period we are considering. To the bulk of the Indian general administrators, this attitude seemed unwise in the extreme. Even the government of the security state, they knew from actual experience, was no easy task. The art of government could only be acquired by practice. Some of them also had some appreciation of the dynamics of the achievement of power. They understood that once one was in a position of power, unless one behaved very foolishly, the development of circumstances would lead always to its increase rather than to its diminution and they had but little doubt that total transfer of power would come all the sooner if the political party to begin with accepted something less. Very few therefore felt called upon, despite the awkwardness of the circumstances, to accept the advice of the politician to resign. In the light of events, that their decision was to the advantage of the country can scarcely be questioned. The Indian state, when it came, could not have escaped disaster, if in addition to being in charge of politicians completely inexperienced in the art of government, it had also had to be without experienced senior administrators.

If for the purposes of future administration any general inferences are to be drawn from this period, they must be the value and importance of training, the necessity for honesty at least in the higher levels and of efficiency throughout, the need for objectivity and impartiality in decisions and the appreciation by those in power of independent advice tendered by their subordinates. With the training of the past, I have dealt sufficiently. To meet the altered and complex conditions of modern times, more is needed on the formal side than the rule of thumb method of the past. It is hardly necessary to emphasise the value of the example of honest behaviour in high places, though it may be worthwhile to say that honesty includes not only freedom from monetary peculation but also freedom from those more subtle and sometimes more dangerous forms of corruption, nepotism and patronage. When it is generally known that decisions are taken purely on the merits of the case, respect inevitably follows and one test of a good government is its ability to let its servants take their decisions on the merits of the case without fear or favour. With this is related the capacity of creating in subordinates the feeling that they can express their opinions without hesitation even when they know these are likely to differ from the superiors' views. This would generally be at the stage of consideration before decisions had been made but it should not necessarily be ruled out even after decision. It was a great merit of government in this period and of government under the same constitution even later that it neither punished frank expression of opinion from its officers nor even resented it. When for instance a Commissioner had, after expressing his views in writing about the transfer of a particular officer seconded for a time to another department, discussed the matter with the Governor and obtained his consent and the file had been passed down through the Secretary to the other Secretary concerned, it did not arouse resentment when the other Secretary resubmitted the file asking for further consideration and in noting said that it seemed to him that in not allowing this transfer which he had originally mooted,

every interest had been considered except the public interest. Again it was quite possible for a Governor to say smilingly to a Secretary who had elaborated greatly on the immorality of a course of conduct proposed to the Governor by even higher authorities than himself "I have read with interest your Convocation Address. I will pass it on. It should have its effect". So too an Adviser who had set his mind firmly upon a particular course of action would still ask for his subordinates' views, or if he did not ask, would be prepared to consider views put to him. One, a very strong, decisive and able individual, whose grasp of principles was exceeded only by his knowledge of, and ability to go into, details, on a certain occasion outlined to his principal officer what he obviously considered a really brilliant plan to meet a dangerous and emergent situation. Having listened to it at length, the officer said; "It can't be done". "What do you mean?" said the Adviser, quite annoyed, "I've worked it out in detail. Of course it can be done". Said the officer looking at him gravely; "Physically, of course, Sir, it can be done. What I mean when I say it can't be done is that it would be wrong to do it". He then proceeded to explain briefly why it would be wrong. Though still red in the face, the Adviser listened attentively. He then dropped off into a brown study and for several minutes so complete a silence engulfed the room that one could clearly hear the ticking of the small clock on the table. Suddenly he said; "Yes. You are right. It would be wrong. I had very nearly set my heart on it but we won't do it". This then was the measure of some of the men who held power. Is it any wonder that they were well-served?

The three principal events of the next period which brings us to the present day were the war, with its impact upon the country and the administration, the transfer of power with its effect upon the class of the general administrator and the partition of the country with the special problems which arose from it. The war imposed several additional responsibilities upon the general administrator.

In the early year these largely resolved themselves into watch and ward throughout the country and in addition at the centre to the provisioning of troops here and abroad. With the fall of Burma, however, and the holding up of the rice supplies from there, serious difficulties began concerning that vital necessity, foodgrains. On the general administrator, especially in the deficit provinces, in the cities and big towns to begin with and later in the rural areas, a tremendous additional responsibility devolved. The people must be fed. The failure to realise and rise to this responsibility by a ministerially-ruled province on the other side of India caused one of the greatest famines of modern times, and was rightly regarded as a most serious blot not only on the record of the Ministry concerned, but of the Government of India which had failed so clearly in its supervisory capacity. Improvisation was the keynote of the time. No plans had been worked out, no preparations made. It would seem to have been taken for granted that the war was a matter for the West and that this country's role would be confined to serving as a base of supply. That conception had to give way almost in the twinkling of an eye-lid. In the larger deficit provinces, Bombay and later Madras, Supply Departments sprang up and soon after, the Centre too converted its office of Wheat Commissioner into a Food Department.

In the beginning the idea was to get in supplies from somewhere and anywhere and distribute at fair prices through special shops in the cities. This meant each province scrounging round on its own and assisting its wholesalers to bring in grain. It also meant queues of 500 strong standing outside the grainshops from early hours in the morning to get their minimum quantities and people returning to buy again and again until it seemed that however great the stocks put into the shops, they would never suffice. It was clear that for any extended period distribution of this kind would not serve. The demand had to be successfully limited. Rationing, so that no one could get more than a certain quantity in a certain period, had to be brought in.

The general administrator found himself turning for the solution of his problems to the hitherto distant fields of economic theory. The practical economist, the expert with a profound knowledge of theory, and an equally profound understanding of the possibilities and methods of its application —alas, how very limited his number in this country,—came into his own. Thereafter in all the developments that followed in Bombay—and in food matters Bombay practice set the pattern, sometimes, unfortunately, at a very remote distance, for all India—his advice was one of the most relevant factors. It soon became clear that rationing in the cities alone would not do. The demand of large towns also had to be limited. To meet needs, the resources of the countryside had to be mobilised, from which came monopoly procurement and the levy. Provision had to be made too for seeing that landless labourers and inadequate producers in the rural areas were not starved, which led to the setting up of rural distribution centres and rural rationing.

The role of the general administrator had altered with a vengence. In addition to his other duties, he had now become a monopolist, the only wholesale dealer in grain throughout the province with full control over all retail dealings except for very small quantities within village boundaries and was responsible for the actual conduct of the majority of the retail grainshops in the province. One of the largest businesses in this country with an enormous turnover was being run by a government department staffed by general administrators with the general administrators in the districts as its agencies. All the ramifications that go with trade in such bulky commodities as grain were being handled by ordinary government methods. Nor was there overmuch talk of red-tape and the inability of government servants to understand the needs of business. The people, after a little astonishment at the way in which the thing was working, on the whole seemed not dissatisfied. The majority co-operated. Even the principal political party, then in the throes of violent opposition, did not throw

its weight against this activity. Some of its adherents set up a people's food council with branches in the districts to keep a watch on the proceedings generally. The council served a valuable purpose by bringing to light complaints which could be investigated. Relations between the council and the food adminstration continued cordial since on both sides was the realisation that useful work was being done. A very great deal of the credit for the extremely satisfactory way in which this experiment turned out must go to the Food Advisory Councils of non-officials, one for the city and one for the province, that had been set up from the early days and, more especially, to their Standing Committees. The effectiveness such joint popular and official effort can bring to bear on any problem cannot be better exemplified than by the work of these councils. Since they might well serve as examplars even in these days of popular ministries, it may be worthwhile to expand on the subject a little. The Food Councils met once a month. It was a convention that their advice would generally be accepted and that if it were not, adequate reasons would be given. The fullest details about the stock position, the working of past plans, proposals for the future were placed before them. The Standing Committee for the city council met at least once a week, sometimes in the early days when things were difficult, even twice or thrice a week. The Standing Committee for the provincial council met at least once a fortnight. All matters of any importance were put to them, including sometimes even routine cases with any special significance arising for the first time, and their advice was sought. The members were public-spirited men. They represented all classes of the community. They had no axes to grind, no interest to serve beyond the common weal. They were men of intelligence, accustomed to the handling of practical affairs. They felt fairly confident that no axes were being ground on the official side, too. "This administration by committee", in the words of an able and indignant young official who could not go ahead with a project until it had been put to the committee, served the province well. The result was a co-

operative effort, the like of which had not been seen before in the country and unfortunately, taking into account present-day circumstances, does not seem likely to be seen in the near future. So much for Bombay. Food in other parts of the country too, especially the deficit areas, became very much the concern of the general administrator. Nor did it remain entirely outside the scope of administration even in the surplus provinces, after the report of the Food-grains Policy Committee of 1943. Though it was one of the most regrettable errors of the Centre that it failed to enforce a uniform food policy throughout the country, yet several of the surplus areas had to make available certain quantities for distribution to the deficit provinces. To this were added direct imports by the Centre and one of the principal tasks of the general administrator in the deficit areas was negotiation to get a fair allotment out of the total central pool to meet the needs of his province, whence followed not unoften heated discussions both on paper and across the council table.

Another effect of the food developments was to make the general administrator very conscious of statistics. Figures of production, consumption, offtake, all these and many others acquired a new significance. Attempts began to be made to ascertain the laws of their variations, if any, for the life of the people might often depend on the conclusions drawn. For the first time under the title of 'Statistician' an econometrician of great merit found a place in the Bombay secretariat. In a short time, his advice had become indispensable and as a side-line to his activities, to the mechanics of administration was added the clatter of comptometers and tabulators.

One real principle food control established for the first time in this country was that every person, whatever his status or wealth, had a right to be able to buy at a reasonable price a minimum quantity of articles of such vital necessity as food; further that when the total amount available

of the commodity was limited, nobody, whatever his wealth or status, could be allowed to buy more than a minimum. In other words, the millionaire and the sweeper were put on the same footing in this particular matter, however great the difference between them otherwise. "Fair shares for all". Though in practice this has not been universally attained in the sense that many rich men have not hesitated to use their greater purchasing power to indulge in the deplorable anti-social practice of buying in the black-market, yet on the whole, wherever enforcement has been at all satisfactory, there has been a fair amount of approximation to the ideal. In the debates on decontrol, the most important labour leader in a great industrial city, stated that not more than 1 per cent bought supplies in the black-market. Nor was food the only commodity with which the general administrator had to deal. Sugar had been controlled and had soon to be rationed. The holding of prices becoming a matter of vital importance in view of the inflation caused by the pouring in of money for supplies sold abroad, cloth too came under control and it became part of the general administrator's duty to attempt to distribute this scarce commodity to the advantage of the people, once more through the agencies that had already been dealing with food.

Though the bulk of the textile production of the country was concentrated in Bombay, since the cloth produced served the needs of the whole country and the Government of India was greatly concerned with the obtaining of sufficient supplies to meet the needs of the armed forces both in India and abroad, it undertook cloth control. Regretfully it must be recorded that in this matter, the general administrator was not particularly successful. That he should seek non-official co-operation was undoubtedly desirable but that he should seek it, and seek it almost exclusively, from the parties most intimately concerned and should establish them in the position of arbiters in their own cases was an error of the first magnitude. The initial mistake vitiated the whole control. Nor has there later been even upto today sufficient vigour

and recognition of facts to enable cloth control to function to the greatest advantage of the country. Prices, it is true, were reduced somewhat at the time and since then it has served as some check on the more extreme predatory elements of the manufacturing and trading classes, but that is all. The attempt to hold prices also involved the general administrator in the control of various other commodities affecting the life of the people and the cost of living. The success with which these responsibilities were discharged depended often upon the ability of the individuals concerned, and their power to obtain honest service from their subordinates. Corruption on the whole undoubtedly increased. Yet at the end of the war, a system had been established which although it worked creakily did succeed in holding prices fairly satisfactorily. The general administrator had had new, difficult and varied tasks thrust upon him and had not been found altogether wanting.

In this matter of controls, the task of the general administrator in the last few years has been rendered extremely difficult by the absence of clear policy guidance from government. The administrator has not, to put it colloquially, literally known whether he is coming or going. Scarcely had the new popular government come into power, then it made a breach in the system by lifting jute control. Within a few days there followed the giving up of oilseeds control. Later in circumstances of which you are all aware, came the decontrol of foodgrains and sugar. Many of the general administrators who had continued from the old regime did not hesitate to point out the disastrous effects that were bound to follow, though the view held by many of the new Ministers did affect the advice given by several. The price index having shot up by about 100 points and there seeming little likelihood of its stopping by itself, reluctantly controls on food and cloth were brought in again after about eight months. There has, however, never been any real feeling of confidence that the policy is fixed. There are constant eddies of opinion in the other direction in powerful quarters

associated with government and in government itself. Consequently, enforcement is by no manner of means as effective as it would otherwise be. The Planning Commission has expressed itself strongly in favour of full and proper integrated controls and has stated that in their absence governments' development plans cannot be carried through. And yet there is uncertainty. A government that allows so much doubt to prevail about its intentions or its capacity to enforce them must not blame its instruments for failure in operation, or the people for failure in co-operation.

During the latter part of the advisory regime, the general adminstrator found himself in yet another unaccustomed role, that of planner. Encouraged by the large surpluses that were being built up by provincial governments and by the hope of special allocations from the Government of India, he was put on to prepare plans for the rehabilitation of returning soldiers and the reconstruction of the countryside. It was felt that the end of the war might bring about a great deal of unemployment and the Keynesian doctrine had travelled so far from its home that governments in India were actually contemplating measures to deal with the economic distress that might result from this ceasing of activity. Plans were prepared and blueprints made. Of their merits, it is difficult to speak for they had no chance of being put into action, being radically altered by the new governments on the transfer of power in 1946. The anticipated depression failed to emerge. The large allocation of funds by the Government of India proved impossible and the plans made by provincial governments have had to be further adjusted. It is difficult to state the exact position for full information on the subject is not available though clearly there has been a great deal of reduction, if the present state of primary education in this province, where laws having been passed cannot be enforced for lack of facilities, is any indication.

A new field has, of recent years, appeared for the exer-

cise of the general administrator's powers of adaptability. The State having decided to launch out on certain industrial enterprises has entrusted, in some cases, their setting up, and in others, their running, to him. He is thus concerned with the management of the Damodar Valley Corporation, the Sindri Fertilisers, the Eastern Shipping Company and the Vizag Ship Yard. The future will show how far such experiments are successful but there is no reason to think that policy formulation being satisfactory and final, the general administrator will fail to do his part. The whole question of the efficient management of State enterprises is of course another matter. It bristles with difficulties. Clear and logical solutions likely to work effictively have been placed before government. But a desire to be logical has hardly ever inspired governments in India. Clarity, too, brushes aside so firmly the finer shades of ambiguity which are the last refuges of secretariats that its value is apt to be underestimated and the assumption often is that what is clear cannot be correct or profound.

Two other recent causes that have thrown new burdens on administrators have been Partition and Merger. The administrative arrangements for partition which ordinarily would have taken years and even in this special case, were originally designed to continue till April 1948, were suddenly curtailed to August 15, 1947 owing in part to the inability of the Indian and Pakistani sections of the government to work together even for the remaining eight months and in part to the desire of Lord Mountbatten to devolve responsibility from the British as quickly as possible. The bulk of the hurried work fell on specially selected general administrators on both sides, the old Indian general administrators, we may call them for perhaps the last time. On the whole there can be do not doubt that as worked out by them, the arrangements were technically satisfactory. The failure—and it was a fundamental failure whatever eloquent apologists may now say—lay in the refusal of the politicians both Indian and Pakistani and of the last Viceroy to under-

stand the temper of the people of the Punjab on both sides of the partitioned line and of the repurcussions that the fact of partition would have upon them. Merely in order to honour a date, to have proceeded to partition in such haste when in several of the partitioned districts, the district organisations had still to be built up, the police forces to be established, was to exhibit a light heartedness unworthy of statesmen. The succeeding problem of refugee maintenance and rehabilitation has certainly been a source of great anxiety to the general administrator in many areas.

In bringing about the merger of the states, the general administrator, and in particular one very specially qualified administrator played a great part indeed. The unification of India was, of course inevitable, for it was clear from the beginning that very few followers would be prepared to shed their blood to keep any prince on his *gadi* and that accordingly the states must, like ripe apples, fall into the gatherer's hands with, at the utmost, a few shakes. But the quickness and ease with which the unification was brought about reflect the greatest credit not only on the statesman primarily responsible but on the administrators concerned. It is unfortunate, of course, that the same cannot be said about the later administration of all the merged areas, in some of which the people have been brought to the pass of wishing that their old rulers were back again. How far this is a function of the politicians who have replaced the rulers and how far the administration is to blame cannot be assessed with any certainty. The position in some areas is, of course, complicated by the existence of special circumstances that do not make for harmonious working such as for instance local jealousies between portions of a newly constituted administrative area, each one of which has its own ancient history and traditions and considers itself entitled to lead the new association. In several areas, the general administrator has been spared by the Government of India to take a few of the principal places in the administration. Occasionally local inertia and methods have been too strong

for him. Occasionally his insistence on a somewhat rigid adherence to the forms and methods used in his parent province has delayed progress. As one saddened Minister was constrained to remark, "We have fallen into the maze of experts. God alone can now show the path out!" In some areas, of course, the general administrator has produced excellent results in the sense of introducing a modern administration without in any way causing a revulsion of feeling.

The Post-Independence period called for a special effort by the Indian general administrator in two other fields, Defence and External Affairs, with both of which on the whole his acquaintance had been extremely limited in the past. The management of Defence as a part of the British Empire, with London making all the really important decisions and arranging for munitions, supplies etc., was a very different thing from the administration, provisioning and maintaining of the armed forces of Independent India. The times too were difficult, beyond the ordinary; the defence forces of old India had to be divided up; the shock of the bloodshed and rapine in areas from which came some of the best fighting men of the country had to be absorbed without letting it affect their quality or disinterestedness; the principle of the defence forces as the impartial instrument of the civil power for the protection and security of the country and as nothing more, had to be made quite clear. Nor were the tasks rendered any the easier by the almost immediate embitterment of relations with Pakistan, the conflict in Kashmir and all that has followed since then. While a great deal of the credit for the present satisfactory state of the defence services must go to the men of the defence forces and especially the officers, many of whom have had to take on responsibilities for which their training had been little or none, to the British Chiefs of the Services, who continued under the Indian Government for some time for the Army and who still continue for the Air Force and the Navy, there can be no

doubt that all effort would have been in vain without the strong, steady, central pull of the general administrators responsible.

The general administrator has also had to provide a large part of the personnel not only for the conduct of the Ministry of External Affairs but even for appointments abroad under that Ministry. Here, too, the nature of the work was in many ways new to this country; its importance, undoubted. On the whole, the Prime Minister's policy has been carried out effectively. There is of course the very real point that, in view of the paucity of trained men, most of the general administrators in the higher posts abroad could with great advantage to the country be employed in difficult work at home, their places being filled by suitable non-officials.

These pictures of the multifarious activities into which the general administrator has been plunged since the transfer of power are all the more remarkable in view of the fact that with the transfer of power his ranks were greatly depleted. Almost the entire British element of the general adminstrator class disappeared. The one or two remaining whom one comes across occasionally seem to have the air of ghosts revisiting the haunts of their ancient glory. The burden and heat of the day fell on the Indians who remained, the same Indians whom the incoming politicians had so strongly abused in and out of season. To the outsider it might have seemed that a crisis was inevitable. But the inherent political sense of our people, demonstrated on more than one occasion in difficult circumstances, asserted itself. The public servant had been an administrator for the British and had been well-treated by the British. At the same time, he was an Indian. He had grown up with the aspiration for freedom from foreign rule. The change accordingly was welcome to him. He could moreover feel that his own skill and ability, the way in which he had managed responsible work, had also had something to do

with the willingness of the British to transfer power. They could be certain that they were leaving behind them in key positions throughout the country psople who could be relied upon to try their best to prevent disruption and chaos. The wisest among the politicians too saw clearly that the government of a vast country without proper instruments was impossible. They found in the general administrator a suitable instrument ready fashioned to their hands not only for the purposes for which it had been used in the past but even perhaps for fresh uses which they would introduce. Smooth working was essential. Almost immediately therefore came reassuring statements from the Minister in charge of services and though past differences and history still cause certain maladjustments in some quarters, on the whole, the fact of the change of masters has not by itself affected in any detrimental manner the usefulness or capacity to serve of the general administrator.

Meanwhile the numbers had to be made up. Temporarily the work was sought to be done by making acting promotions. The goddess of fortune emptied her cornucopia over many a roof as men who had never hoped to be Assistant Secretaries found themselves Deputy Secretaries and those whose ambition would have been to be appointed Deputy Collectors towards the end of their service found themselves acting as Collectors! But permanent arrangements were essential. While in the words of an American President of the past, it is generally true of people in posts that "few die and none resign", yet the inexorable decrees of nature and time cannot always be defied. Accordingly the normal recruitment to the general administrator class had to be continued. It could have been done without altering the designation of the service from which most of the members of the class had come in the past but perhaps it was thought best to make a clean break, especially as advantage was taken at the same time of bringing the emoluments more in line with Indian conditions. The new Indian Administrative Service was created to serve the

needs of both the centre and the provinces, recruitment to it being by open competetive examination. At the same time, it was thought desirable to take advantage of talent outside the government field or outside the older circle in the government field and select therefrom a certain number of people after application and inspection by the Public Service Commission. This was the emergency recruitment of the Indian Administrative Service.

Let us now turn to the future. The Constitution of India, more especially the directive principles mentioned in it, lays down as the aim the establishment of a real welfare state based on secularism, egalitarianism and mutual co-operation. This means, unless of course we are to take the document as expressing vain hopes never to be translated into action, the carrying through by perfectly legal and democratic means of a social revolution, with particular emphasis on the economic side. Primarily, in order that there shall be welfare, there must be wealth. At present, of course, not only as a country are we extremely poor but such wealth as there is, is most unequally distributed. Clearly then, more wealth must be created and wealth which already exists must be more equitably spread. The present inequalities must be greatly reduced. That any such really extensive programme can only be brought about by state action must be obvious to even the most confirmed adherent of private enterprise. Too many interests are concerned, too large quantities involved for the profit motive to be able to produce results.

Today, then, as it faces the future, the Indian state finds its task vastly enlarged, its functions greatly diversified. The functions must be discharged, the task carried out. There can be no going back now to lesser tasks and narrower functions. The choice is between irretrievable failure and determined action. But a state can act only through its instruments. Chief among these is the general administrator. The question then arises: Is the general

administrator a suitable instrument for all these new purposes which, in addition to the old, the state is called upon to fulfil? If he is not, is it possible by adding to his training to make him suitable? Would it be better to scrap him altogether and devise a new instrument? It seems clear from the foregoing discussion that while we are aiming at a social revolution, we are not proposing to establish it by revolutionary methods, in other words, by destroying the present structure of life and society completely by violence and then leaving to such as survive rebuilding nearer to their heart's desire. While maintaining the essential framework of the state, we propose distribution of stresses and fresh building. In other words, there is to be an addition to the structure and in order that the addition shall not be out of perspective with the rest, a certain amount of demolition and adjustment of the old. In these circumstances, since law and order is still to be maintained, ordinary efficient administration to be continued, there would seem to be little advantage in throwing away the instruments that have been well-trained for the discharge of these duties in the past. At the same time, without some modification, they are not likely to perform satisfactorily the duties contained in the new tasks we have in view. The general administrator of the future, while possessing the same high sense of duty, the same independence of mind, the same honourable tradition, the same capacity for turning his hand to anything new, must in addition be completely free from the bureaucratic spirit, the tendency to regard himself as a separate caste, as something distinct from the people although coming of the people. He must be able to possess the great gift of government, the ability to put himself inside the skin of the governed. He must bleed when the people are pricked and he must feel on his own arm the pinch upon theirs.

In this context of the future role of the administrator, let us ask ourselves three questions and attempt to answer them in the light of recent experience. How shall the ad-

ministrator be recruited? What shall be his training? What are the conditions to be created, both within and outside himself, so that he shall function efficiently?

Recruitment, it seems clear, must continue to be by the system of competitive examination. Whatever the defects of the examination system, there is no doubt that, while offering a fair way for the assessment of merit and industry, it eliminates, if conducted honestly, the possibility of the use of influence and unfair practices. There is much to be said for the introduction of psychiatric tests in place of, or even in addition to, the present oral tests for personality. These tests moreover may be useful in the discovery of aptitudes specially adapted for managerial work. Since we are thinking in terms of a common service of general administrators for the whole country, clearly the examination and the training will have to be as at present in the central language. There has been a good deal of controversy on the matter of language and so far as one can see, it is not likely to grow less with the passage of time. Whatever the language of official work in the provinces, it seems fairly clear that it will be to the advantage of the province and of the general administrator that he should be sufficiently proficient in the central language to be able to answer his question papers in it and receive training in it. In the future, even greater advantages in the sense of exchange of experience will lie in the transfer of officers from the states to the centre and the centre to the states. Moreover, since the aim set out can only be achieved by central planning, and since discussions with the centre are bound to be continuous and inevitable, it will always be an advantage to the provincial administrator to be able to work in the central language.

A point sometimes raised is the failure of some parts of the country to get representation in the central service because of the backwardness or lack of development of facilities for preparation in those areas. It is felt that something is seriously wrong when people from some particular

areas alone obtain as many as half of the vacancies in such a service over a period of years. People are apt to rationalise their resentment at the failure of their own kind by placing the issue on public grounds. Excess of the peculiar attributes of a particular section, it is said, is not conducive to good administration. When one has too many general administrators whose mental make-up lies in the direction of hairsplitting and logomachy, administration must suffer, Any agreement to this kind of argument must lead to reservations for particular areas, which would destroy both the all-India character and the possibility of obtaining the best men in the country as a whole. If, indeed, any general mental fault can be attributed to a whole people, which I for one would find it difficult to accept, during the training period effort should be directed to reduce its power among those supposed to be affected. The real answer is for all areas to develop facilities and induce their better men to compete for the public service, making it clear to them that though the rewards thereof in monetary terms may be insignificant as compared with rewards in the business field, yet the scope and variety of the work and, more especially, the service it enables them to render makes it worthy of choice by the best. One need hardly emphasise the strength of this last argument in this city, where so many of the best have preferred the tradition of serving what they consider desirable in the best interests of the country to that of the acquisition of wealth.

There comes next the question of training. Here there has undoubtedly been a serious fall back in recent years. The new recruit spends his probationary year at the Delhi Training School. One would have thought that, considering the importance of the work these young men are to be put to, the School would have been built up by this time into a very fine educational and character-moulding institution, and that there would have been no difficulty in obtaining funds for all reasonable facilities. Yet in the report to the Planning Commission on Public Administration which I

made in April 1951, I had to note that the School lacked a full-time Principal, the Principal's duties being done by an officer who also held the onerous responsibilities of the posts of Establishment Officer to the Government of India and Joint Secretary to the Home Department. I understand that despite that Report, the position remains very largely unaltered. The Establishment Officer is still the Principal, though he has ceased to be Joint Secretary to the Home Ministry. Nor does he live on the School premises and spend all his time among the pupils. Clearly the Government of India is not very serious about proper training during the probationary period for those who are to hold the key posts of India's administration in the future. Again, the young I.A.S. man is likely to be at a great disadvantage in comparison to his more fortunate predecessor when he reaches the districts. On account of the depletion of personnel, the likelihood of the existence of a suitable slightly senior colleague to whom he can be attached is not very great. Moreover, in most provinces, almost all the people who would have been Collectors in the old days are in the secretariat or doing special jobs, so that the informal part of the training too is not likely to be available. It has been suggested to governments that suitable senior officers should be posted to some districts, despite their seniority, with a view to make these districts training grounds for the young, but between the making of a suggestion and its acceptance lies always the strong will of the people to whom the suggestion is made. In the I.A.S. there is undoubtedly good material. If, in the years to come, it so happens that it does not bear comparison with the best men of the past, one reason will be failure in training.

Training can no longer be restricted merely to the beginning of service. In addition to initial training, the system of special courses and of refresher courses lasting for a month or more at a time, spaced throughout the length of the service, should be adopted. Secondly, the basic training should be extended in three directions. The general ad-

ministrator must have a sound knowledge of practical economics. He must be able to understand the application of economic theory to practical problems. He must be taught enough of practical psychology to be able to evoke the right responses to his leadership from the people amongst whom his work will mostly lie. His understanding should be sufficient to enable him to grasp how their minds work and what points touch them most. Since State enterprises are likely to occupy a very important place in the future and since the nationalisation of a number of existing industrial enterprises will also have to be undertaken, some of the general administrators, who show a special aptitude for managerial tasks, should be diverted at an early stage of service to training in such enterprises and in the art of management.

To some of the administrative problems arising from the new economic bias of the affairs of government, and, in particular, from the state's incursion into the fields of control, distribution and production, there has been offered as solution the organisation of an "Economic Civil Service". This suggestion has come at different times from different quarters; and, though the phrase used is the same, it has usually been employed to convey different things. But, taking the broad concept of an Economic Civil Service, let us analyse it in the light of the possible functions of such a service. These are three. There is first of all the executive one of implementation of policy. Secondly, there is the normal secretarial function, in its turn threefold, of administration of policy, formulation of subsidiary policy and presentation of material for the making of main policy. Lastly there is the high level secretarial function of advising in the making of main policy. Considering these functions in the reverse order, I think it is quite clear that a person who starts as an Economist in government service—that is to say as one recruited for his high academical qualifications in the subject—is by no means, after years of service and routine, the best suited to advise the Cabinet on the solution of im-

portant economic problems. Such advice—and there is no doubt that government is, and will always remain, sorely in need of it—must come from distinguished non-official economists who are specialists in their line. The normal secretarial functions I have referred to are of course in a different category. Very often the knowledge and technique of the trained Economist and the trained Statistician are indispensable for the proper collection and presentation of material or for the informed formulation of subsidiary policy. Larger use of the academically qualified Economist and Statistician in the central and state secretariats is undoubtedly necessary, and this need may be said to have found recognition in recent years, tardily perhaps and, at the start, it may be even grudgingly. But a certain number of officers employed for this purpose is something very different from an Economic Civil Service. In the matter of execution, and in particular in the management of State Enterprises or the administration of controls, is the formation of a service solely recruited from graduates in Economics either necessary or desirable? All administrators, in the new order of things, must have a knowledge of basic economics, and those who administer industrial concerns or operate specific controls should undoubtedly have special training not only in certain branches of economics but also in various aspects of business management, etc. Such training should be given to suitable candidates recruited at the proper age. Young men suitable for the managerial and administrative jobs in question are by no means confined to graduates in Economics. Here again there is no place for an Economic Civil Service properly so called. The need, rather, is for giving specialised training to the general administrator earmarked for specific jobs which call for such training.

In view of the better standards of education in urban centres, the background of the general administrator is more likely to be urban life than rural. A great deal of his work however will be concerned with the rural areas, for the effect of planning will have to make itself felt there very

emphatically if it is to serve a really useful purpose. Accordingly, special care will have to be taken to see that the trainee gets a thorough understanding of the problems of the countryside and in fact acquires a rural bias. This will be especially necessary in the early years until education has spread sufficiently in the rural areas to enable competition to be fair.

Assuming, then, that we have our general administrator properly recruited, thoroughly trained, how are we likely to get the optimum benefit from him? He has to work in new conditions. What is the broad characteristic of those conditions, and what are the factors, external and internal, which are likely to affect the efficiency of the present-day administrator? These are some of the questions we must now attempt to answer.

The one really important feature of the last five years from the point of view of the administration has been the change in the administrator's position in regard to the source from which he derives his power. His authority now comes not from above but from below. He is the servant of the people. That is the real implication of democratic rule. The people exercise their power through elected Ministers. These again are specially selected servants appointed temporarily for a period for the purpose of conducting government in the interests of the people. They act through the permanent servants at the head of whom is this group of general administrators. The general administrator then is not only a servant of the people; as a servant he carries out the policy laid down by other servants of the people and acts under their instructions in all matters in which the law does not clearly assign duties to him direct. This new position of the servant of the people is not merely a constitutional concept, a form of words to which respect must be paid and nothing more. The whole future of administration and indeed a great part of the future of the welfare of the country depends upon the general administra-

tor's feeling this position in a real live manner as something affecting fundamentally his daily work and thought. In brief, to him the public interest must be the prime motive of existence and work. Although the concept of the servant of the people was not clear in the past, yet amongst the general administrators of the times which we have been considering, there have been men who lived upto this ideal. I have known individuals to whom in the expressive Sindhi phrase, "Food and water became unlawful", until they had set right certain injustices under which the people laboured. In the double duty of the past, however, to the British Crown and to the Indian people, there was room for confusion. Also the service of the people, when the authority for that service came not from the people but from outside, might mean that which each servant thought was the right service and not that which the people wanted. There is now, by the grace of Providence, only one clear duty and no room is left for any such ambiguity.

As is naturally to be expected, when power comes to inexperienced hands, there has on occasion been a misconception of its function by the second group of the servants of the people mentioned above. The Minister, to whom in the light of the Constitution and system of government we have adopted, falls the formulation of policy and the supervision of its execution, in both cases assisted by his principal secretariat officials, has been inclined to stray into the execution himself. An extreme case was the Minister who could not understand why it was wrong for him to transfer sub-inspectors by verbal order and why he must make his wishes known to the proper authority in whose jurisdiction this power lay. The Minister has also on occasion seen fit to decide matters not in the light of general principles universally applicable but rather in that of the persons interested, one result of which has been different decisions on similar facts leading to doubt in the administrator's mind.

The Minister sometimes in making his decisions con-

siders political support. His actions may often have their root in the desire to please some powerful legislator or not to displease another. There is a type of legislator, unfortunately not restricted in numbers, whose interest lies not so much in policy as in persons. Policies he will accept provided in personal matters where he or his friends are concerned, he can have his way. He will press for concessions to certain individuals. He will urge strong action against others. When the Minister accedes to his wishes in either case, it is once again trenching on the sphere of execution. The general administrator is affected both by the actual incident and by the fact of the knowledge that influence is and can be exercised in this irregular fashion by particular legislators. In such circumstances, morale is shaken. Even-handed justice in administrative matters becomes impossible. If a matter has to be decided in which the person concerned can bring to bear the backing of legislator 'X' or legislator 'Y' who have sufficient influence with the Minister to make things exceedingly awkward if the points of view they urge are not accepted by the immediate deciding authority, it is not unlikely that the merits of the case will come off second best. More especially is this probable when it is felt that a series of decisions against the wishes of the friends of Ministers might well lead to awkward transfers or other marks of displeasure by government. Occasionally, of course, the problem becomes even more serious for it may not be left to the friends or supporters of Ministers. The Minister himself might put in a word initially or by way of reinforcement. Then indeed the position of the general administrator, man under authority as he is, and accustomed to honour authority, becomes extremely difficult. Very few men are capable of living upto their own standards whatever the circumstances. Most will, perhaps with reluctance, live down to the standards of their superiors. So far as one can judge, this kind of interference has constituted in many parts of the country a real danger to honest administration. The student must note that it makes a distinct change for the worse in the role of the general administrator.

Allied to this and having its origin in the same frame of mind is the unwillingness to hear independent opinions, or having heard or being constrained to hear, not to give them that consideration which is always due to every opinion honestly expressed. It is not necessary to enlarge further on this point. Past practice has already been described. Perhaps this particular attitude has its root in a misunderstanding of the respective positions of Ministers and government servants. The feeling is sometimes inclined to be that the government servant is the servant of the Minister. This, of course, is completely wrong. As has been pointed out above, the Minister and the government servant are both servants of the people. They both have places on the same ladder of subordination. The Minister stands on the top rung, the general administrator below him and so down to the last peon. They all have the same master, the public; none is the servant of the man above him. In other words, the relation between them is that of colleagues engaged in a common beneficial task. Put thus, the right to frank expression of opinion at the proper time becomes obvious. That, although the concept of the servant of the people has not been quite clear in the past, this general feeling was prevalent even in the lowest ranks is clear from the remark made to me once by a Havildar, grown old in service, "Surely I have the right to warn you if you are walking into a pit".

These changes for the worse in the role of the general administrator are due to causes external to himself. For certain other similar changes, he himself, in large measure, is responsible. In his role of adviser in the formulation of policy, he is the administrative expert. The scope and complexity of government work has increased considerably in recent years and one who would advise expertly on administrative matters must be prepared to spend time and energy on continuously acquiring new knowledge and refreshing old. What was learnt and taught in the twenties and thirties may form a sound enough foundation but if

advice is to be really useful, it must take into account recent thought and developments. If, as so often happens in the central and some provincial capitals, most evenings and nights are spent in social engagements or family parties, there is little time for that study and reflection which alone brings maturity to advice. Few men have the capacity of that notable administrator, for whom four hours of sleep suffice, so that he can devote the rest of the night to work and general reading. As a plain-spoken Chief Justice once said to a society-loving colleague whose work was never properly prepared because his time was always occupied by social engagements, "Look here, you can either be a social king or a working judge. But you can't be both. Make up your mind or I will make it up for you in a month". More especially does the need for keeping one's knowledge recent and mind fresh become clear as one reflects on the economic policy of government in recent years. While a great deal of the responsibility for this rests upon the Ministers, yet the general administrators too must bear their share of the blame. Slap dashedness has been the distinguishing mark of some. Theory, especially more recent theory, has seemed something to be derided, without any endeavour to understand or assess it, of course. Content to remain in Keynes' phrase, "the slaves of some semi-defunct economist" themselves, they seem to have managed to drag government along too, tied to his chariot-wheels.

For the ordinary person it is difficult to produce over a period his best work when he knows that the man above him cannot discriminate between good and bad work, sincere effort and mere pretence and is probably apt to be more impressed by mere charlatanry than by a solid job well-done. This trend has been noticeable in a number of general administrators in recent times. In the work of some and in their supervision of the work of their subordinates has begun to appear a certain perfunctoriness, a tendency to delay, to carry on and hope for the best, features not conducive to thorough work or real efficiency. In extenuation of at least

the failure in supervision, in some places is urged the difficulty of the maintenance of discipline when subordinates have direct access to Ministers and attempts to punish are met by streams of recommendations from Ministers of other departments, to say nothing of Deputy Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries. Be that as it may, this is an indication of the lower morale of the general administrator and of the absence of proper pride in his work. One notices too not unoften failure in initiative, perhaps as the result of having to submit even minor matters for decision, perhaps as one indication of the lowering of morale. There is considerable delay on occasion even in the tendering of advice to the higher authority. A committee of general administrators dealing with a problem on which it ought normally to report within a fortnight has been known to keep on postponing consideration over several months. Such instances may perhaps be due to awkward implications for important parties. However, it argues ill for the future if in addition to the politician remaining a politician, the official, whose duty it is to express his views on the merits of the case without hesitation, also begins to become a politician.

None of these failings, of course, are irreparable. They can with care, attention and development of morale all be got over. The vitality that there is in the general administration, as led and supervised by the general administrator, has recently been well-illustrated by the excellence of the manner in which the gigantic undertaking of the elections was conducted. The essentials of the job were undoubtedly simple. Broken down into its elements, it should not have presented any very special difficulties. Yet it was a triumph of organisation; in other words, an operation of administrative machinery in which each piece did its duty as it was supposed to do, smoothly and without friction.

Many of these failings can perhaps be regarded as being compensated for by the fact of the greater touch which the administration now has with the people. That contact with

the people is, of course, definitely greater to-day than under the British regime, or during the transitional stage which succeeded it, is undeniable. Whether that contact has in all cases been for the benefit of the people, especially of the poor and less influential section, is not so clear. Whether despite the contact, such people have been able to make themselves heard and have their grievances redressed, is also not altogether free from doubt. The statements of the Food Minister in Parliament on several occasions continuously making out that conditions in various scarcity tracts were much better than they actually were would seem to indicate the failure of the effectiveness of such contact. Contacts with the people may also have meant in certain cases contacts only with the official supporters in particular localities, leading to a refusal to attach any importance to the views of other people or other views as put forward occasionally by the general administrator. It is also to be remembered that greater contact does not necessarily mean greater sympathy. The Ministers of a provincial government, which shall be nameless, especially the Food Minister, should, one would suppose, be in close contact with scarcity conditions within 50 miles of the provincial capital. They should certainly be aware of the actual conditions of extreme shortage. Yet in circumstances in which the authorities of the past of that particular province would have produced grain from anywhere, anyhow, to feed the people, the Ministry ordered decontrol, leaving it to the people to try and find the grain if they could, knowing that they could not. Essential as touch with the people is, even more important is it that the touch should produce genuine sympathy and not merely be for propaganda purposes. It does no good to say: "I have been in intimate contact with four million people", if having power, one does nothing to make living easier for the four hundred million that inhabit the country.

Let us recapitulate what has been said above regarding the new conditions in which the task of administration has to be performed, and the factors which affect the efficiency

with which the task is discharged. The status of the administrator, it has been pointed out, has changed considerably. The change has undoubtedly been all for the good. That it should bring with it certain difficulties was inevitable. That some of those difficulties do not tend to destroy the administration becomes the responsibility of the people, the legislators and the Ministers. The efficiency of the uses of an instrument, apart from the sharpness of its own cutting edge, depends very much on the skill of the user, on those who help or hinder the user in the exercise of his skill and on the material on which it is used. The user in this case is the Cabinet. If it can get on with its own job and make the general adminstrator get on with his, the result should be satisfactory. In other words, there must be a clear policy and a clear expression of it so that the general administrator has no doubt as to what is expected of him. The lines having been set for the execution of this policy, there must be no unnecessary interference. Supervision of course there should be, but supervision need not degenerate into continuous pinpricking. The Minister must also realise that on his complete honesty and disinterestedness depends the long-term welfare of the country. He should be prepared to hold out against pressures and should rather aim at explaining to legislators who bring him individual cases for his favours that they are thereby making good government impossible. If he himself has no axe to grind and will not let his friends grind their axes through him, he can definitely expect the best results from the instruments he uses.

One thing more he can do. He can try and learn to appreciate the difference between good and bad work. The belief prevalent in some quarters that it is better for the official to work under a not too capable or strong Minister is a measure of the extent of fallacious thinking on the somewhat complicated subject of Ministerial-Official relations. At first sight it may appear that the weaker and less capable a Minister, the greater the power of the official, for the

Minister will then tend to rely more upon the advice of the official who will get his way. But at the same time such a Minister is rarely able to fight tenaciously for the acceptance of the views urged by him in the Cabinet or in a Cabinet committee. Indeed, the abler the Minister, the higher the prestige of his immediate official adviser, because of the Minister's success in getting accepted the views he urges, views to the formation of which both he and the department have made a contribution. Despite popular impressions, power hardly ever really passes from the Minister to the permanent official. Accordingly, in the real interests both of the public and of the official, it is best that the Minister should be both able and discriminating. It will also do him no harm if he occasionally allows himself to be so gracious as to utter a word of praise for good work. The appropriate gesture at the right time is of great value and the failure to make it leaves a bad impression not only on the mind of the man concerned but of all his colleagues. Thus, for instance, almost everyone even remotely associated felt disgusted when, on the retirement within the year of a senior administrator of great merit, who had indeed rendered very valuable service during the last five years, there was not the least sign of any recognition either from the Cabinet as a whole or from its head; not even an informal message of goodwill. Even those who had differed strongly from this administrator and some who disliked him intensely were offended. To him it made little difference, but it showed the very little value attached to the instrument by the user and thus affected detrimentally the morale of the class.

Again if the best use is to be obtained from the instrument, the second group, the legislator, must be content to let it do its work according to the law and the orders under the law, without in any way attempting to divert it from its proper path by force of threats or promise of favours. If the legislator converts himself into a kind of parallel official and then gradually attempts to make the official proper carry out his wishes in everything, he may be able to do well for

himself and for his friends but he is destroying all hope of decent administration, and doing real harm to the country, for he is endeavouring to convert to his own use what is intended for the good of the public as a whole. The legislator's position is one of very special privilege. By free, unfettered and informed debate and questions, he can exercise a most healthy influence upon the administration. At the same time, by improper use of the same methods he can destroy both zeal and initiative. The tendency, sometimes unfortunately only too apparent, to blame, even by name, the government servant for anything that goes wrong, the legislator must sternly repress both in himself and in his fellows. Pressure for ruthless action against an official is fully justified, when error or misdemeanour has been made out but continuous sniping in the legislature merely on rumour, gossip or unverified information tends to put a premium on playing for safety. The practice then develops of putting everything up for orders. Life can be so much more peaceful for the administrator both in the ordinary and financial departments if he does nothing and agrees to nothing until someone higher up has seen and taken the responsibility off his shoulders. The public interest, however, is seriously affected. Work, having lost its joy, loses its quality. Of the people, the general administrator is both the servant and the protector. For the best results to follow, the relationship between the two should be one of mutual respect and esteem. And indeed the effect on morale of the trust of the people can be very great. The people can do nothing for an official. It suffices however if they think of him as good, honest and reliable. If indeed he has won this recognition from them, so great is the power liberated by it within himself, that he is often able to accomplish things which would be ordinarily thought completely beyond his capacity.

The days of personal rule are over. Yet, the personal element remains one of the principal factors in achievement. You may have the most modern guns in the world but if the

men behind them are inferior, more often than not, the battle will be lost. So too, the best policy can be ruined by bad administration and the worst can be prevented from producing its most fatal effects by good administration. In any case, a welfare state is impossible without good administration. If indeed such a state is really desired, there must be proper recognition of the value and importance of the general administrator. In the past, owing to historical reasons, the opposition to the administration by the principal political party, the feeling amongst the educated classes on account of the bureaucratic attitude of the administrator and the special prestige to which the administrator was thought to attach great importance, it was usual, except among the most discriminating, to minimise his usefulness, deprecate the value of his work and generally regard him as a cumberer of the earth and a battener on the public purse. That period is over. No one seriously doubts the necessity and usefulness of the general administrator today. But it is not sufficient grudgingly to hold that after all he is not too bad. Man does not live by bread alone. Let it be realised by the Ministers, the legislators and the people that esteem too is a powerful awakener of energetic and rightly-oriented action. For the wrong doer, let there be condign punishment. But let it not be forgotten that "government is a human institution and rests not only on formal arrangement, skill and principles but even more on attitudes, enthusiasms and loyalty. It must be approached as a problem of morale and personnel fully as much as a task of logic and management". Accordingly, if you would have enthusiastic work from your general administrator in a task which is impossible without such work from him, while pointing out his faults to him, remember also that he has the most valuable abilities and qualities and that properly recruited, trained and treated, you can count on him to place the public interest above everything else and display in the performance of the most exacting tasks "the highest talents, the highest virtues and the highest devotion".

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